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MYSTIC
PARIS
Tony Bedard
Al Rio
Roland Paris
Matt Milla

CIRESS

is a world where magic dominates every aspect of daily life. For centuries, seven Guilds of magic have presided over this enchanted globe, owing much to the **Eternal Spirits** of their original Guild Masters. Living on as ethereal phantoms, each Eternal Spirit provided their Guild's current Master with timeless wisdom and sorcerous knowledge.

This ancient balance of power was shattered on the day **Genevieve Villard** was to become Master of the Nouveau Guild. At Gen's Rite of Ascension, a mysterious stranger imprinted a mystical sigil on the palm of her rebellious sister, **Giselle**. When the Sigil's power drew all seven Eternal Spirits into Giselle, a turbulent new era dawned for Ciress. Granted vast magical might, Giselle Villard reluctantly became the most powerful Mystic her world has ever known!

RECENTLY:

Giselle's quest to learn the ways of her world's seven major magical Guilds was proceeding smoothly until she traveled to the land of the Tantric Guild. There, she ran afoul of the Tantric Master, Vashua. She also confronted a demonic invader who hinted at mysterious parties aware of Giselle's power and eager to make an alliance. These mysteries will have to wait, though, as Giselle and her faithful companion **Skitter** return home to the Nouveau lands, unaware that yet another adventure awaits them. An infernal minion named **Domo** has been obsessed with Giselle ever since she broke up the criminal enterprise in which he was involved. Now Domo has a surprise in store for the mystic protector of Ciress...

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"EVER MET A REAL LIVE *GODDESS*? YOU'D KNOW FOR SURE IF YOU *HAD*.
"HAPPENED TO *ME* THE NIGHT I LOST MY LAST *JOB*.
"IT WUZ SORT OF *FACTORY* WORK. I RAN *SECURITY* FOR THE JOINT, AND I WUZ EARNIN' REAL GOOD.
"THEN *SHE* COMES OUT OF NOWHERE AND SHUTS THE PLACE DOWN IN TWO POKES OF A PITCHFORK.
"I FELL IN *LOVE* WITH HER IN HALF THAT TIME."

"ACTUALLY, I'D HEARD ABOUT HER *BEFORE* THAT FROM MY COUSIN *MOMO*, BUT I THOUGHT HE WUZ JUST BLOWIN' HOT AIR TILL I SAW HER IN PERSON.

"SOON AS I MADE BAIL, I TRIED WARNIN' *THE DUKE* THAT WE WUZ UP AGAINST ONE HELLUVA BIG-GUN *MYSTIC* HERE. HE DIDN'T WANNA HEAR IT.

"COME TO FIND OUT LATER DUKE ACTUALLY LAID A *TRAP* FOR HER IN HER OWN CRIB!

"WUZN'T MUCH *LEFT* OF DUKE ABADDON AFTER THE MYSTIC FINISHED WITH *HIM*, I CAN TELL YA...

Er...MAYBE YOU SHOULDN'T TELL ME, DOMO. I MEAN, THIS STUFF SOUNDS, Y'KNOW... INCRIMINATING.
I'M NOT PASSING JUDGMENT, Y'UNDERSTAND. I'D JUST RATHER NOT GET INVOLVED.

I KNOW, PAUL. BUT I HAVETA TELL YOU. IT'S IMPORTANT.
SEE, WITH THE DUKE OUTTA THE PICTURE, ALL THE YEGS IN MY CREW JOINED OTHER OUTFITS RIGHT AWAY.
MOST OF US ARE NO GOOD WITHOUT A BOSS--IT'S JUST HOW WE ARE.

PEOPLE OF...um...INFERNAL EXTRACTION, YOU MEAN. YES, I WONDERED WHY...
...WELL, WHY DIDN'T YOU JUST BLINK BACK TO THE INFERNAL PLANES ONCE YOUR MASTER WAS, um...
RUBBED OUT?

DUKE PAID OFF SOMEONE AT THE IMMIGRATION AND CONJURATION SERVICE TO FIX IT SO MY BLACK CARD DON'T EXPIRE TILL NEXT YEAR.
SO, LIKE I WUZ SAYIN', THE OTHER GUYS ALL GOT NEW GIGS, BUT NOBODY WANTED ME.
MY LAST THREE BOSSES GOT WHACKED. PEOPLE ARE SAYIN' I'M JINXED!

SO I TOOK THIS JOB TO MAKE RENT, BUT WHO'M I KIDDIN'? I'M A CREATURE OF HABIT, PAUL. I WUZ NEVER CUT OUT FOR AN HONEST LIVING.
ANYHOO... I GUESS THIS MEANS I QUIT. SORRY TA SPRING IT ON YA...

Starvin' Dauphin
...BUT LAST NIGHT I FINALLY NOODLED OUT HOW TO BREAK MY OWN JINX...
...CUZ IF I'M RIGHT, THEN I GOT AN INSIDE TRACK ON THE MYSTIC...

Eh?
SECURITY!
WHAT COULD GET IN PAST THE CATHEDRAL WARDS?
JUST BE READY WITH THAT STAFF!
GUYS

...BELIEVE IT OR NOT, I THOUGHT THIS WOULD BE A *LOW-KEY* WAY TO DROP IN!

Oh, I *BELIEVE* IT. MAYBE YOU SHOULD START *CALLING AHEAD*, GISELLE.
GENTLEMEN, YOU'RE DISMISSED.

SO. GUESS WHERE I JUST CAME FROM...?
MASTER VASHUA TOLD ME SHE ACTUALLY ASKED YOU TO *LEAVE* THE TANTRIC LANDS. DON'T TELL ME YOU MANAGED TO *EMBARRASS* THE GUILD-WITH-NO-SHAME--?

Considering your sister was running amuck at "skin central," it was pretty tame.
ACTUALLY, SOME PRETTY TROUBLING STUFF WENT DOWN.

I CAN'T DECIDE IF VASHUA IS *IN* SOME KIND OF TROUBLE--OR TRYING TO *START* SOME.

WELL...SHE'S ALWAYS BEEN TEMPERAMENTAL, BUT...I'LL LOOK INTO IT.
THANKS. BY THE WAY, I HOPE I DIDN'T POP IN AT AN AWKWARD MOMENT, Y'KNOW...*THIERRY*-WISE?
NOT TODAY...
BUT, LIKE I *SAID*: START CALLING AHEAD.
IT'S GOOD YOU'RE HERE, GISELLE. THERE'S SOMETHING I NEED TO SPEAK WITH YOU ABOUT.
ACTUALLY, IT'S SOMETHING ONE OF MY MINISTERS BROUGHT UP AT A SENIOR STAFF CONCLAVE. I'LL LET *HIM* EXPLAIN...
TING
MINISTER ELZEAR TO THE NORTH RECEPTION CHAPEL *IMMEDIATELY*.
TING TING TING

IS SOMETHING *AMISS*? THIS IS RATHER AN *ODD* HOUR TO... TO...

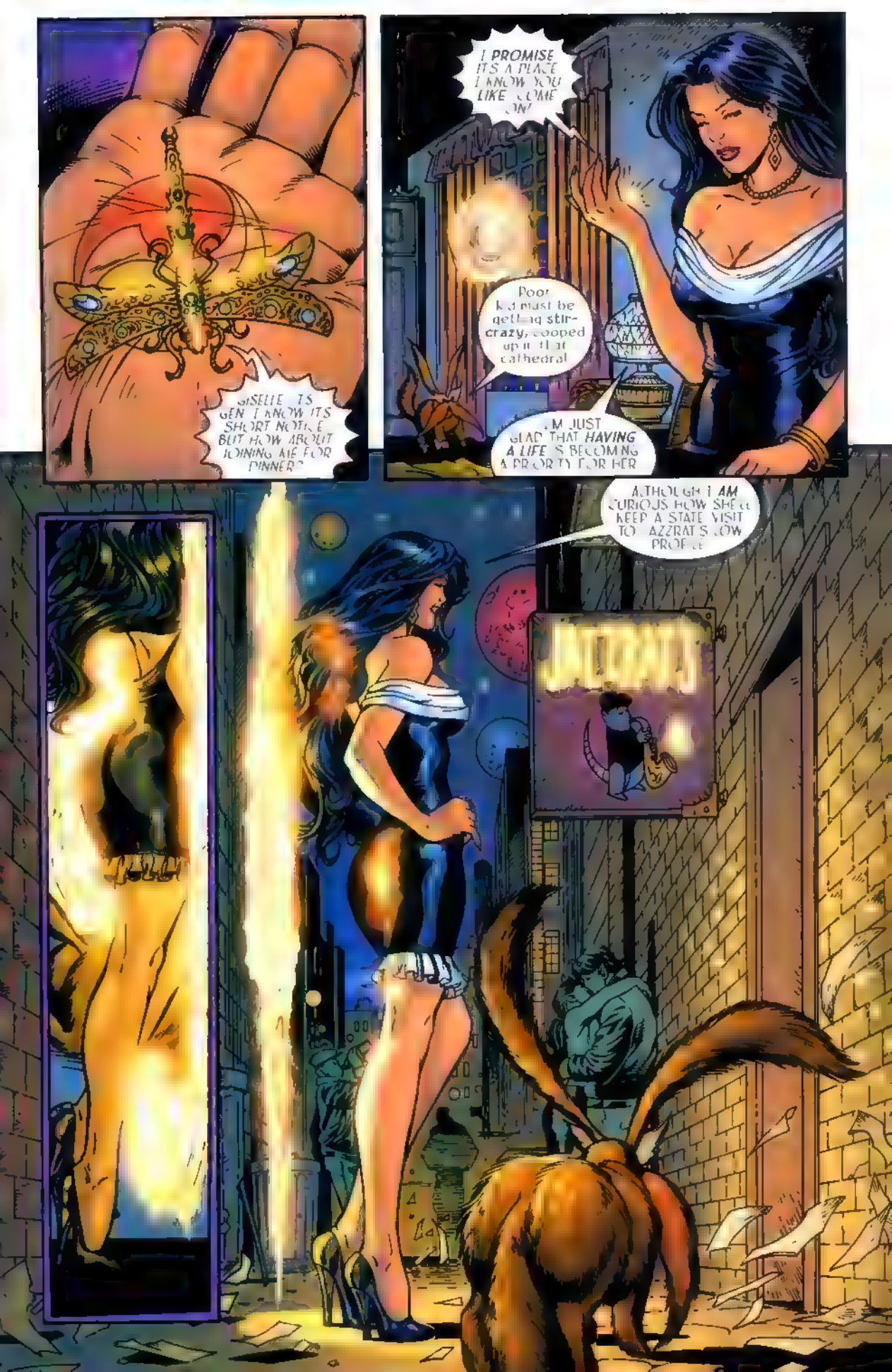
MINISTER ELZEAR, PLEASE TELL MY *SISTER* WHAT YOU TOLD ME AT THE LAST MEETING.
...YES... GOOD MORNING, MISS VILLARD. I...

I SIMPLY POINTED OUT THAT IN THE WAKE OF YOUR RATHER...*HIGH-PROFILE* PART IN THE WAR AGAINST ANIMORA...
...*AND* YOUR RECENT ACTIVITIES WITH THE MASTERS OF THE SHAMAN, DJINN, ASTRAL AND TANTRIC LANDS...
...WELL... THERE ARE *MANY* AROUND THE GLOBE WHO HAVE *WITNESSED* YOUR MYSTIC ABILITIES FIRST-HAND.
THE SENIOR STAFF IS *CONCERNED*.

CERTAIN *RUMORS* ABOUT THE NOUVEAU MASTER'S *SISTER* HAVE LATELY GAINED CURRENCY IN THE PRESS AND ON THE SCRY-NET.
WE HAVE TO GET OUT *IN FRONT* OF THIS ISSUE BEFORE IT'S ALL OVER THE NEWS, OR WE WILL LOOK LIKE WE'VE BEEN *HIDING* SOMETHING FROM THE--

THE PUBLIC, ELZEAR, HAS A RIGHT TO KNOW CERTAIN THINGS ABOUT MY PRIVATE LIFE, BUT NOT GISELLE'S.
I WANTED TO SAY THIS IN FRONT OF BOTH OF YOU: THE NOUVEAU GUILD WILL DO NOTHING TO REIN IN OR CONTROL MY SISTER'S LIFE. SHE IS OFF LIMITS. AM I CLEAR ON THIS?
Y-YES...
YOU'RE DISMISSED, MINISTER.
IS IT JUST ME, OR DID YOU JUST WITCH-SLAP THAT MAN?
I KNOW I'M BAD, AREN'T I?
SERIOUSLY, I HAD TO NIP ELZEAR'S LITTLE POWER PLAY IN THE BUD. BUT HE MAKES A GOOD POINT, GISELLE.
Yeah, toots. Are you planning your coming-out party...or just waiting till you're "outed?"
...

I'M TELLING YOU, I HAVEN'T SEEN HER SINCE BEFORE MY MASTER DISAPPEARED!
NOW SCRAM, BEFORE YOU GET ME IN HOT WATER WITH MY NEW BOSS--
SAVE IT, MOMO. JUST TELL ME WHERE TA FIND THE MYSTIC NOW!
I SWEAR, IF YOU WUZN'T BLOOD, I'D CUT YER GREEDY HANDS OFF FOR HOLDIN' OUT ON ME
IT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE MY COUSIN THAT I'M NOT SAYIN' I'M TRYIN' TO SAVE YOU SOME GRIEF!
YOU DO KNOW WHO SHE IS, DON'TCHA? I SWEAR TO YA, MOMO, MY WHOLE FUTURE IS AT STAKE! I GOTTA MEET HER!
>SIGH<
ALL I'LL TELL YOU IS SHE SOMETIMES HANGS OUT AT A NIGHTCLUB CALLED JAZZRAT'S
BUT IF YOU SEE HER, DON'T DO NOTHING STUPID! IF SHE COULD MAKE A CHUMP OUT OF DARROW, SHE'LL SQUASH YOU LIKE A BUG!


GISELLE, IS GEN. I KNOW IT'S SHORT NOTICE BUT HOW ABOUT JOINING ME FOR DINNER?
I PROMISE IT'S A PLACE I KNOW YOU LIKE. COME ON!
Poor kid must be getting stir-crazy, cooped up in that cathedral.
...I'M JUST GLAD THAT HAVING A LIFE IS BECOMING A PRIORITY FOR HER.
ALTHOUGH I AM CURIOUS HOW SHE'LL KEEP A STATE VISIT TO AZZRAT'S LOW PROFILE.
JAZZRAT'S

I DON'T SEE HER MAYBE WE GOT HERE FIRST ?
JAZZ RAT'S
COME ON SEE OUR TABLE IS THIS WAY
HEY...!
YOU'RE GONNA HAVE TO WORK ON YOUR PICK UP LINES, MISTER
PICK-UP ? OH ELLE THAT IS SO WRONG IN SO MANY WAYS

GENEVIEVE
VERY COOL GEN MAYBE WE CAN EVEN GET THROUGH DINNER WITHOUT THE WORLD FALLING APART
Don't be too hasty
EXCUSE ME GREAT LADY I DON'T MEAN TA INTERRUPT BUT DO YA MIND IF I SPEAK WITH YOU FER A MINUTE ?
YOU
YOU WERE AT MANSON'S LITTLE FACTORY
YOU REMEMBER ME I'M HONORED
SHOULDN'T YOU BE IN JAIL?

NOTHIN WUZ GONNA KEEP ME FROM YER SIDE
EXCUSE ME?
I COME TA PLEDGE MY ETERNAL DEVOTION TO YA I'M YERS TA COMMAND IF YOU'LL HAVE ME
I'VE SEEN YA IN ACTION AND YER YER THE BLAZIN QUEEN A DEATH !
Talk about your bad pick up lines !
I'M ONLY ASKIN TA SERVE YA
TA BE AN INSTRUMENT OF YER TERRIBLE WRATH
EMBARRASSING PEOPLE !
UNDERSTOOD
I'LL FIX THE PROBLEM
GISELLE!

SEE? I CAME PREPARED!
KRAKKA-KRAKKA-KRAKKA-KRAKKA-KRAKKA-KRAKKA
I KNEW YOU'D PUT ME TO THE TEST!
GEN!
GOT IT!
SEVEN SPRITS
ZING
SPANG
ZING

NICE SAVE SIS
I'LL TEACH IT TO YOU LATER
RIGHT NOW I'M JUST GLAD YOU STOPPED HIM FROM FIRING ANY MORE
KRUNCH
KRAK
DEMON WHO'S YOUR MASTER? WHAT IS YOUR BUSINESS ON THIS PLANE?
WHAT THE--? HER THE NOUVEAU GUILD MASTER ?
AN' DID MY MYSTIC JUST CALL YOU HER SISTER?!
SO IT'S YOU WHAT GAVE HER THE POWER! YOU YOU WUZ BEHIND THIS WHOLE MYSTIC RUMOR IN THE FIRST PLACE WEREN'T CHA?!
IT WUZ ALL JUST A TRICK TO RUB OUT THE MOBS!

YA CAN'T DO THIS!
YA CAN'T GIVE A GUY A REASON TA LIVE AND THEN RIP IT AWAY!
FINE! I AIN'T AFRAID TA DIE
PLINK
PLINK
AND YER ALL COMIN WITH ME!
TIME TO GO, GEN!
POOF

WHERE IN THE ?!

BELLE

GOT 'EM

BOOM

BOOM

PUNK

PUNK

STOP IT! STOP

?

NO

WHY ?

WHY DOES *EVERYTHING* I DO TURN TA *GARBAGE*?

I WISH I'D NEVER BEEN *SUMMONED* NONE OF US EVER BE LONGER ON STRESS MUCH LESS ON THIS *PLANE*

PLEASE JUST KILL ME JUST

GET IT OVER WITH

I'VE SEEN THIS *BEFORE* WITH NEFERNA'S MINIONS EVEN IF YOU DON'T DO ANYTHING HELL DISSIPATE SOON

THEY NEVER LAST LONG HERE WITHOUT A *PURPOSE*

GEN

HELP ME GET HIM IN THE TROVE CELLAR THEN GIVE US A MINUTE *ALONE*

RISE, MY DARKLING SERVANT!
Huh?
YOU HAD THE BAD TIMING OF APPROACHING ME WHEN I WAS WITH THE NOUVEAU MASTER
NOW THAT SHE BELIEVES YOU DEAD, SHE HAS RETURNED HOME THE FOOL
AND NOW I CAN SHOW MY TRUE FACE
SHOULD'VE LET YOU ALIVE FOR NEARLY UPSETTING MY INFILTRATION OF THE NOUVEAU GUILD BUT
YOUR DEVOTION HAS TOUCHED ME
THEN YOU WUZ JUST TESTIN MY WORTHINESS O1 MY MYSTIC TIL FOLLOW YOU ANYWHERE DO ANYTHIN
YES I DO HAVE A TASK FOR YOU A MOST IMPORTANT MISSION
HERE UP ON THE SACRED MOON NOT DOWN AMONG THE MORTAL CATTLE

WHICH BRINGS US BACK TO THE FACT THAT PEOPLE ARE GOING TO MAKE WHATEVER THEY WANT OUT OF YOU UNLESS YOU CONTROL YOUR *OWN* STORY
DEMON DEATH GODDESS. SMART WEAPON. MYSTIC STOOGE
IT SEEMS LIKE EVERYONE HAS TRIED TO IMPOSE THEIR OWN VIEW OF YOU *UPON* YOU
LET'S GIVE IT SOME THOUGHT AND FIGURE OUT HOW *YOU* WANT PEOPLE TO SEE YOU BEFORE THIS GETS EVEN MORE OUT OF HAND
YOU THINK WE SHOULD SAY THAT I'M SOME KIND OF NOUVEAU *SOLDIER MAGE* OR SOMETHING? AT LEAST MY *DRESS* LOOKS THE PART
Folks are going to **check out** your story, kid. If they find out that the Guild spirits are in **you** now instead of where they **oughtta** be
INSIDE *MYSELF*, AND THE SIX *OTHER* PEOPLE WHO RUN THE WORLD'S GOVERNMENTS
YES. I *HAVE* CONSIDERED WHAT A TRICKY STORY THIS WILL BE TO SPIN
AT LEAST THERE'S *SOMEONE* WHO DOESN'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT HIS FUTURE ANYMORE

YOU HEARD HER GUYS
THE MYSTIC CHARGED ME WITH A SACRED MISSION-- CLEANIN UP AND CARIN FER HER SECRET SANCTUM!
YOU FAIRY FOLK VE GOTTEN A FREE RIDE IN THIS JOINT FER TOO LONG! TIME TO EARN YER KEEP!
YER HEARBY RECRUITED TA GET THE PLACE SPIC-AN-SPAN NOW, GET TA WORK!

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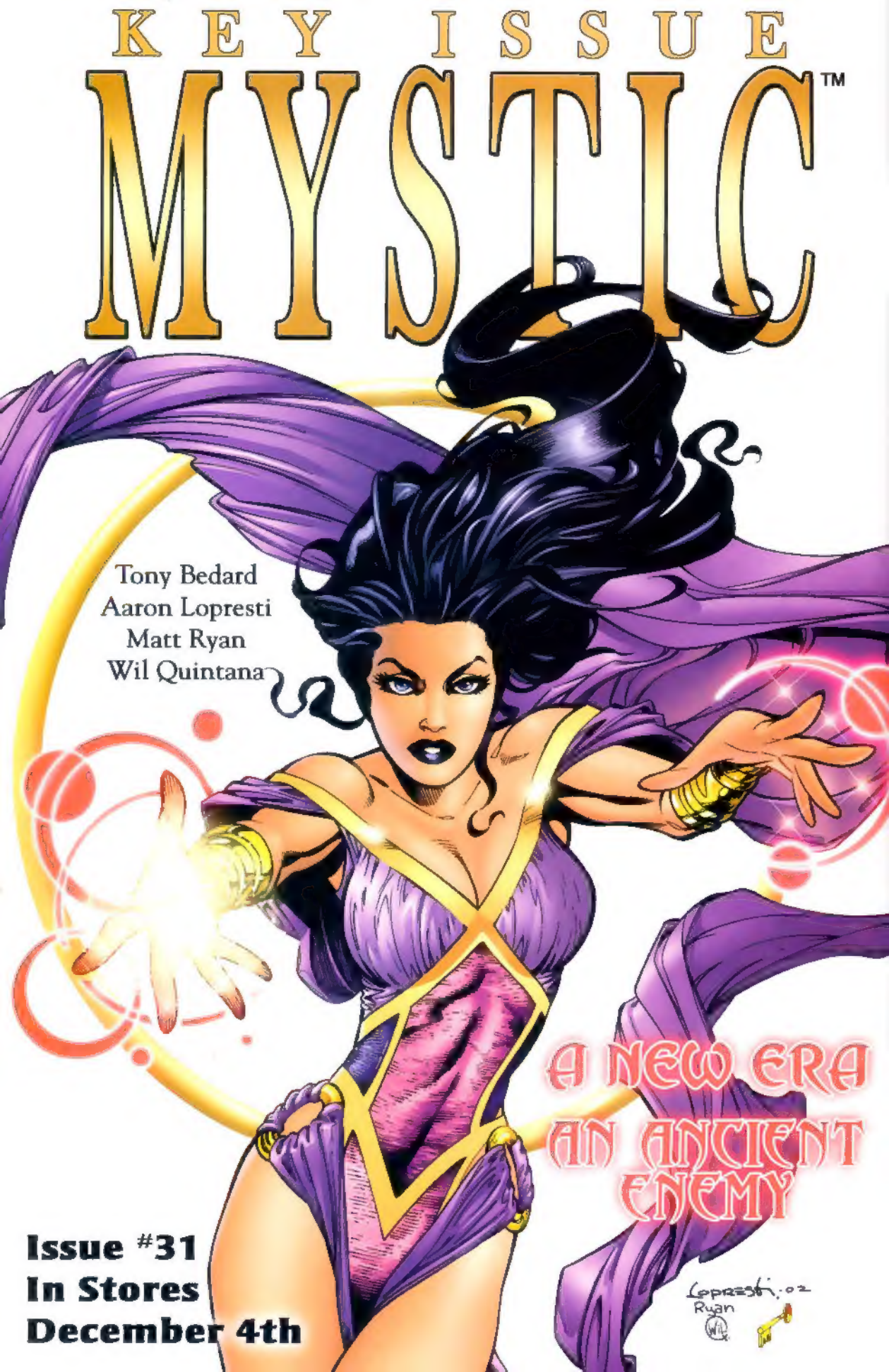
KEY ISSUE

MYSTIC™



Tony Bedard
Aaron Lopresti
Matt Ryan
Wil Quintana

A NEW ERA
AN ANCIENT ENEMY

Issue #31
In Stores
December 4th

MYSSPELLINGS
PLEASE LET US KNOW IF YOU DON'T WANT YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS PRINTED. MARK YOUR E-MAILS AS "OKAY TO PRINT." LETTERS MAY BE EDITED FOR CONTENT AND LENGTH.

Dear MysSpellings:

I really enjoyed issue #27; Giselle is playing with the djinn and he doesn't realize it. Giselle is fast leaving the party girl persona behind and is taking her studies seriously.

I have a question: she doesn't seem to be spending a lot of time with each Guild. Nouveau I could under-stand, since she was brought up there. But, shouldn't she be taking more than a day or two to learn about each of the other Guilds? Don't most Masters spend years and years studying them? Well, at least Giselle is showing the spirit that she is trying.

Animora seems to be gone, for the moment at least. Is Giselle going to have another major force of evil to face? If all the powers of the other Guild Masters were stolen and put into one person would they be able to stand up to Giselle's power?

Tony, Fabrizio, Matt and Andrew all did a wonderful job. The cover makes you feel like you are in ancient Baghdad. Giselle makes one lovely genie.

Yours truly,
Richard Vasseur
London, Ontario, Canada

Giselle wasn't trying to learn everything there was to know about each Guild, Richard. After all, she has the Guild Spirits for that...if she can get them to talk to her again. The point of Giselle's travels to each of the Guild lands is to demonstrate her change of heart after her experience with Animora, to show each of them respect (pretty lacking, up to this point), and to try to understand the philosophical underpinnings of each. If she accomplished all these things Giselle was hoping that she could regain the trust of the Guild Spirits; Giselle knows better than anyone how much she's relied on their input in tight situations. As for another major antagonist for our girl, we've already laid the foundation for that. Careful reader that you are, I'm sure you'll be picking up on it soon.

MysSpellings,

I don't like to repeat myself in my letters (although you know I end up doing it anyway), but again I find myself saying that MYSTIC continues to get better and better with each subsequent issue. Issue #27 was no exception and continues to craft a fantasy world unlike any I've ever seen before. MYSTIC has never been this strong and we're only on the third Guild!

Mr. Fiorentino is also getting better and better every month. Here, I noticed just how much his detail is improving on each page. He truly has a great handle on each of the characters and I can't wait to see what he can do six months from now.

Looking back, I realized this issue only had one moment of violence, and it wasn't even extreme. But, the book doesn't need violence to work, and this issue is the perfect example. It's about stories, how to tell them and the meaning of those stories. Such a simple thing, and yet it's one of the most original comics this year.

It's amazing how Giselle was able to defeat this issue's villain, who turned out to be an okay guy anyways, without throwing a "punch." She gave off a light show from her sigil, but in the end used her brains and not her powers. She really is growing as a person, and I can't wait to see the next way she grows.

I loved the issue. Mr. Bedard continues to impress, as does Mr. Fiorentino and the rest of the creative team. (Bye, Mr. Crossley, you did some great work and you'll be missed.) Keep up the good work.

Robert Taylor
smsuso@core.com

Robert, I agree that Giselle's been making great strides in personal responsibility lately. I think her "party girl" image got in the way of everybody understanding how smart she actually is. As you've probably noticed already, Fabri is moving on to other CrossGen work to stretch his artistic wings. Look for him

next in the pages of SIGIL, which, coincidently, is where you'll also be able to find Andrew Crossley permanently located now. MYSTIC remains in good hands though, with Aaron Lopresti as regular penciler (beginning with next issue) joining old hands Tony and Matt and middle-aged hand Wil.

❖

Howdy, Gina!

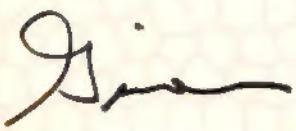
Well, Tony did what was expected of him by doing something unexpected with Giselle's journey to the Astral Guild's land in issue #28. I half expected Mr. Mxyzptlk, or the Warner Brother's Dodo to float past in one of the backgrounds of this topsy-turvy "wacky land," but the inclusion of the nay-saying skeptic fellow was a clever touch. I wonder if this was a disguised retort to criticisms other folks have directed at this book, or Tony in particular, or comics in general. His speech certainly seemed torn from the "pages" of some comic message boards that I've seen.

It looks like the jig is up as far as Giselle keeping the secret of the Guild Spirits from the public any longer. I wonder what the repercussions of this will be if it indeed gets out. Nosy reporters!

See you in the funny books!

Jared Moraitis
Newton, NC
Punkmonkey@earthlink.net

To the best of my knowledge, Jared, no retort to anything was intended. This issue was written quite a while ago as part of the arc delineating the nature of the Astral Guild's magic and if it made a statement about the lack of imagination in the world – or some parts of it – well...what can I say?



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MYSTIC (in the subject line)

CROSSCURRENTS

by Gina Villa

Hello again, everybody.

I thought that this month I'd clue you into a new thing we're doing here called "Key Issues." Even after almost three years of publishing, we still get letters from folks saying something to the effect of "Wow! I can't believe what I've been missing all this time! I just started reading your books because I saw your (fill in this blank with: compendia/Comics on the Web/trade paperback, etc.). I never read your books before because of that sigil thing tying all your books together and I didn't wanna have to buy all sorts of books and I didn't think your company was gonna make it and by the time I knew it would make it, the books were too far along and I didn't wanna come in in the middle of a story and...and...and..." You get the picture. Well, we've decided to make it easier for people to get with the CrossGen program by addressing these issues. In November, when you drop by your local comic shop you'll begin to see a new look popping up on certain issues of every CrossGen Universe title. These new logos and trade dresses are the banner for CrossGen's new Key Issue Program, aimed at helping new readers jump on-board CrossGen's existing monthly titles.

Each Key Issue will contain a complete story that fits into the current longer-term storyline, but with certain key elements and characters featured in such a way that new readers can come on-board easily without needing to have read any previous issue of that title – or any of the others. The current plan is to have one Key Issue every month, and one Key Issue per year for each title. The scheduling may work out differently, as the Key Issues will always feature that title's regular art teams (not relief artists), so there may be slight variations as time goes by. The logos of the books will change for that issue only, and the style of that logo will be consistent for every title published in the Key Issue Program. The issues will also have a Key Issue banner running across the top of the book, and a miniature sigil-key near the artists' signatures. As a matter of fact, you may be holding the first of our Key Issues – THE FIRST #25 – in your hand right now.

Okay, by this time all our old fans are looking at me like "Gina, why are you telling *me* this?" because I'm preaching to the converted. But, bear with me for a minute, okay? I just wanted all of our existing readers to know that these Key Issues are important to *you*, too. We're not just going to rehash the storylines with which you're all already familiar and cheat you out of your money for that month; that's not what CrossGen is about. All the Key Issues will be books you can't miss, *important* books, paying off plotlines that have been building and moving the story in fresh and exciting directions. So, look for that distinctive cover treatment with even more anticipation than you normally have; we won't let you down. Trust me.

CROSSGENERATION COMICS, INC. RECOMMENDED GOOD READ!

by CrossGen Chief Operating Officer Gina Villa

Recommended R Reads

Witchblade #59, published by Top Cow, written by David Wohl, drawn by Brian Ching.

Written by one of the original Witchblade creators, David Wohl, and drawn by Brian Ching, Witchblade #59 has an intriguing premise, beautiful artwork, and solid storytelling to boot. Clearly returning to the early origins of the character, the creative team has helped rekindle the book's excitement by bringing her story back to the basics of Sara Pezzini's love-hate relationship with the Witchblade. Definitely worth taking a look at!